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ABSTRACT

The report describes a collaborative effort to develop an inservice training package for regular teachers working with handicapped students. The effort drew upon work of the local education agencies (LEAs), an institution of higher education, and a regional education service center. The development of the training package is described. Two field tests were conducted and evaluation instruments were designed to evaluate participants' knowledge, skills and attitudes, as well as the scope and sequence of the program. Among post-project activities were training sessions for LEAs and followup evaluations of the program in selected LEAs. Twenty-eight references are included, as well as an outline of project objectives. (CL)

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A MODEL APPROACH FOR EFFECTIVE STAFF DEVELOPMENT OF REGULAR CLASSROOM TEACHERS IN TEACHING HANDICAPPED STUDENTS

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A MODEL APPROACH FOR EFFECTIVE STAFF DEVELOPMENT OF REGULAR CLASSROOM TEACHERS IN TEACHING HANDICAPPED STUDENTS

As a result of recent legislation and litigation, regular classroom teachers bear increasing responsibility for the education of handicapped students. Although this trend toward "mainstreaming" is supported by the majority of regular classroom teachers, few feel adequate and competent in meeting the resultant instructional demands. It is clear that extensive inservice training of educational professionals, especially regular classroom teachers, is required if the quality of educational programming for all children is to be provided. With growing numbers of mildly handicapped children entering regular classes, regular classroom teachers bear increasing responsibility for the education of very heterogeneous groups of students. While the willingness and ability of regular classroom teachers to effectively deal with mildly handicapped children has been questioned (Cruickshank, Paul & Junkala, 1969; Glavin, Quay, Annesley, 1971; Rubin & Ballow, 1971), the importance of regular education teachers and the need to provide this group of educators with adequate training and support is evident (Zigler & Muenchow, 1979).

Hewitt and Watson, (1975) found that the majority of regular classroom teachers supported the placement of handicapped children in the regular classroom, but few felt adequate and

competent in meeting the differential instructional demands. McGinty and Keough (1975) reported that replies from over 400 teachers demonstrated extensive agreement that knowledge of new skills was necessary for the instruction of handicapped children, but none felt adequate implementing this task. Stewart (1983) identified a significant relationship between "willingness to integrate" and "special training or knowledge." In summary, variables contributing to reluctance in providing instruction for the handicapped appear to be teachers' attitudes (Birch, 1970 Martin, 1974), feelings of inadequacy (Shotel, Iano & McGettigan, 1972), and lack of specific skill preparation (Martin, 1976).

The National Education Association publicly endorsed the mainstreaming of handicapped children, but attached several conditions to that support. Among conditions cited were (1) that both regular and special educators are prepared to assume the roles and (2) that appropriate materials, resources and supportive services are also provided (National Education Association, 1975). The statement that ".....special education students have been placed in regular classrooms with no provisions for support services, individualized instruction or teacher and student preparation" (Handicapped stir concern", 1976) made in a report of the American Federation of Teachers exemplifies both the reluctance to work with handicapped children and a reasonable appraisal of the lack of support systems for mainstreaming. Ryor (1978), former President of the National Education Association,

outlined the perspective of the regular class teacher regarding P.L. 94-142. He reiterated the concerns discussed above and noted other specific concerns of regular class teachers, i. e. the need to learn how to serve as a full partner in the development and implementation of individualized educational programs (IEP's) and the need to participate in inservice activities, the content for which the regular teacher has helped to generate.

To meet this need, P.L. 94-142 (1975) requires "the development and implementation of a comprehensive system of personnel development which shall include the inservice training of general and special educational instructional staff and support personnel." The inservice training of regular class teachers represents the most viable means of improving educational service for the mildly handicapped child. Given these needs it is not surprising that a recent survey of all fifty states found that regular education teachers were "far and away the greatest single thrust of inservice concerning education of the handicapped." (Smith-Davis, Burke & Noel, 1984).

However, while many service delivery models include as one component the professional development of regular educators (Christie, McKenzie & Burdett, 1974; Lilly, 1971; Shaw & Shaw, 1971) many of the traditional inservice programs have been regarded as inadequate and irrelevant to expressed teacher needs (Siantz & Moore, 1971).

Problems in Inservice Training

Most current inservice programs and approaches present many more problems than solutions. The literature is replete with criticism and negative feedback (Reynolds, 1978; Spillane & Levenson, 1976) on the lack of scope, long range planning, and follow-through. In addition, because of poor planning, most programs usually deal with only one of the key elements: knowledge or attitudes or skills. There is often not enough time to systematically integrate knowledge, attitudes and skills as well as to provide for practical implementation.

These concerns and problems have been elaborated by Skrtic, et. al., (1979), Morsink (1979), Rude (1978), and Wieck (1979). According to Rude, over 2 million regular educators require inservice training with respect to P.L. 94-142. The magnitude and breadth of these needs clearly require a systematic attempt to effect change. It is necessary for each school system to do its own needs assessment to determine training priorities of each consituency (Gable, Pechoeone & Gillung, 1979).

Wieck (1979) and Skrtic, et. al., (1979) make several suggestions when considering an inservice program with respect to P.L. 94-142. They suggest several conceptual modifications of traditional inservice programs. Included are:

a. the need to relate inservice programs to assessed personnel needs,

b. the need to provide a variety of strategies and

techniques for inservice programs, and

c. the need to systematically evaluate the impact of the inservice program in both behavioral and cognitive terms.

Skrtic, et. al., (1979) take the inservice training issue one more step. They suggest that a positive conceptual methodology is needed in order to develop an effective inservice curriculum.

Although Herda (1980) suggests that inservice programs should reflect the specific situations and contexts of LEA's he recommends some general guidelines:

a. Administrators and teachers should participate in inservice programs together.

b. "School site inservice relates to specific building level concerns."

c. "Inservice education related to P.L. 94-142 implementation should reflect the expertise of both exceptional and general educators."

d. ".....inservice education programs based on partnerships among local education agencies and universities" provides for significant growth and development. (p. 12)

Margo Johnson (1980) noted that inservice education has been required of teachers and imposed and delivered by others. She also indicated that inservice has often been fragmented, unsystematic and devoid of a conceptual framework.

The Collaborative Effort

To meet these needs the Connecticut State Department of Education used its federal discretionary funds under P.L. 94-142 to offer a grant titled, "Staff Development for Regular Educators in Teaching Handicapped Students." Requirements for the grant proposal included:

a. The product must be developed by regular educators with assistance from special educators.

b. The training package must be field tested, revised as necessary and approved by the Department of Education at several points in development. A two year grant period is provided to allow full evaluation of the product.

c. Formal follow-up of training must be incorporated into the procedures to assure that the principles of the training are being applied.

d. Sufficient copies of the training package to ensure state-wide dissemination or state-wide use must be provided.

Several school superintendents simultaneously contacted The University of Connecticut's special education faculty and administrators from EastConn, a regional education service center (RESC), regarding the state grant proposal. A collaborative effort between the local education agencies (LEA's), institution of higher education (IHE), and the RESC was initiated in writing the grant proposal. Figure 1 depicts the relationship between agencies and the role of each.

Through this initial collaborative effort, project responsibilities were delineated. It was determined that EastConn would service as the overall management and fiscal agent for the project, the LEA's would house the inservice training field tests, and The University of Connecticut faculty and students were designated as the project staff. The university staff would be responsible for the development of the inservice training package and the coordination of project activities. The staff from the LEA's would not only receive grant stipends to participate in training and evaluate the materials, but would also serve as the inservice trainers.

Figure 1 About Here

The success of these collaborative efforts was based upon a number of factors including a long history of positive relationships among personnel from the major agencies involved in the project. University faculty have, over time, had professional contacts with the LEA's, the RESC, and the State Education Agency (SEA), through inservice training efforts, student teaching supervision, and consultantcies. In addition, it was clear from the outset that each agency could have a variety of needs met through these joint efforts. It is critical that the coordinating agency, in this case UConn, take pains to assure that each constituency receives the benefit it expected.

Plan of Operation

The plan of operation for this project is outlined in Figure 2, a flow chart of project activities. Since the timeline and major activities are delineated in the flow chart at this point only major areas will be amplified.

Figure 2 About Here

An overriding strength of this project was the prior extensive experience the agencies involved brought to this endeavor with respect to the development of inservice activities. These agencies have successfully teamed regular and special educators and possess the skills, at all levels (planning, training, writing, and packaging), to design a useful training package for statewide dissemination.

Pre-project (June, 1983) activities included reviewing available training materials and models of inservice training gathered from the National Inservice Network and other agencies in the effort to review a variety of approaches to "packaging" the training program.

Development of the Outline/Model/Concept of the Training Package

A critical element in the project was the development of a functional approach to the organization of the training package. The product objectives for this project, specified in Table 1,

indicate some preliminary plans (process of change, local needs assessment, etc.) which are receiving ongoing review and evaluation by the staff. The initial stage of the project was characterized by many long, exciting and loud staff meetings during which an outline for the training package was decided upon. After the outline was complete various staff members were assigned the task of writing different sections of the training program. Individual sections were then written, followed by a final review and editing process done by the entire staff prior to initial field testing. As a result of the evaluation data from field test 1 the entire training package was revised with significant changes occuring in the organization and sequence of the inservice package. A similar review and revision will occur after the second field test.

Table 1 About Here

Field Test

Two field tests of the training program were planned. The first field test was intended as an initial de-bugging of the training program. This was implemented by LEA personnel with the support of project staff.

The second field test is planned as the final evaluation of the training package which will be implemented totally by LEA personnel.

Evaluation

It is important to note that the evaluation is multi-faceted in that process and product objectives are to be evaluated. The field test evaluations focus primarily on providing information on the effectiveness of the elements of the training package not on the effectiveness of the workshop or of the trainers. Feedback is therefore provided on the elements of the training program which may need revision. A post-evaluation (about four months after field test 2) will be conducted to assess the implementation and maintenance of the new skills learned. The following sections will describe specific evaluation instruments.

a. Training Package. Of primary importance during the development of training materials is a comprehensive evaluation of the scope and sequence of the program content as well as the related training activities. Evaluations of the training package will be carried out by the training leaders, the field test observers and participants. The training leaders and observers will be most familar with any needed revisions in the training package and manual as the training sessions progress. On an ongoing basis the leaders will complete logs following each presentation, an overall evaluation form and participate in project staff meetings where structured "interview" analyses will be carried out regarding the materials.

b. Participant Knowledge. A modified version of the Rucker-Gable Educational Programming Scale (RGEPS) will be

administered pre and post each training pilot. The RGEPS will monitor increases in participant knowledge of proper placement of handicapped children. The area addressed by the eight RGEPS items only focus on students with mild disabilities. Each item (case description) is rated on 7-point scale ranging from the regular classroom to outside of public education. Responses are compared to those of a set of experts to define the extent of knowledge in each area. Adequate reliability and validity data are available in the RGEPS manual. Analysis will consist of related t-tests.

c. Participant Attitudes. Participant attitudes toward handicapped children will be measured on a pre-post training basis using the RGEPS scales. Employing a "social distance" concept, the RGEPS measures the extent that teachers wish to be near particular types and degrees of disabilities. Increases in attitude during training will be analyzed using the related t-test.

d. Participant Skills. Prior to each pilot of the training package the participants will complete the 65-item Connecticut Inservice Needs Survey for Regular Teachers which provides self-perceived present and desired skill levels across five target areas (e. g., Planning Instruction for Handicapped Children). While these discrepancy data will be used to set training priorities for the instructional package, they will also be used in conjunction with post-training ratings to evaluate the extent that present and desired skill levels are closer at the end of

the training. The analysis of the needs assessment data will consist of related t-tests at the .05 level.

e. Participants will also provide ongoing feedback regarding the content (scope/sequence) of the training package. A short evaluation form will be developed for optional use after each training session. Participants will have the opportunity to suggest revisions in content emphasis and additional activities at the end of each session. Making these weekly evaluations optional will lead to participant involvement in constructive comments. At the end of the overall training each participant will be asked to rate the training in such areas as extent that knowledge, attitude and skills were developed or enhanced in the areas reflected in the Product Objectives presented earlier; degree to which the training met their needs; final suggestions for modifying the instructional materials. Analysis will consist of percentages and summaries of suggestions.

Post-Project

A number of post-project activities are planned to maximize the impact of the project and the resultant training package. They include:

a) the availability of project staff for technical assistance to LEA's implementing the training program,

b) training sessions for leaders from LEA's implementing the training program,

c) a follow-up evaluation of the training program in selected LEA's, and

d) presentations to statewide groups promoting the availability and use of the training program

Summary

If the educational system, including both special and regular educators, is to be successful in carrying out the intent of P.L. 94-142, that is to provide "free appropriate education" in the "least restrictive environment", the major parties within this system must work collaboratively. Through this collaborative effort, a clearer understanding of not only individual student needs but of teacher and classroom needs may result. Keough and Levitt (1979) speak to the issue of implementing the concept of least restrictive environment or mainstreaming in terms of the existing "confrontation of limitations." They address the importance of matching educational arrangements, including administrative capabilities, with learner characterisics. Their research points to the lack of perceived competence on the part of regular educators with respect to educating handicapped students within their classrooms.

The development of the training package, described within this paper, is one State's attempt to foster collaboration among the factions of State administration, higher education, local administration, and regular and special education personnel. The projected result, an inservice training package which can be

implemented by any LEA, may be a first step toward the elimination of the lack of confidence of regular educators in the education of handicapped students. The second and following steps must focus on the successful use of new knowledge and skills. And, as teachers become more successful in educating handicapped students we may also find more "accepting" attitudes toward this population of students.

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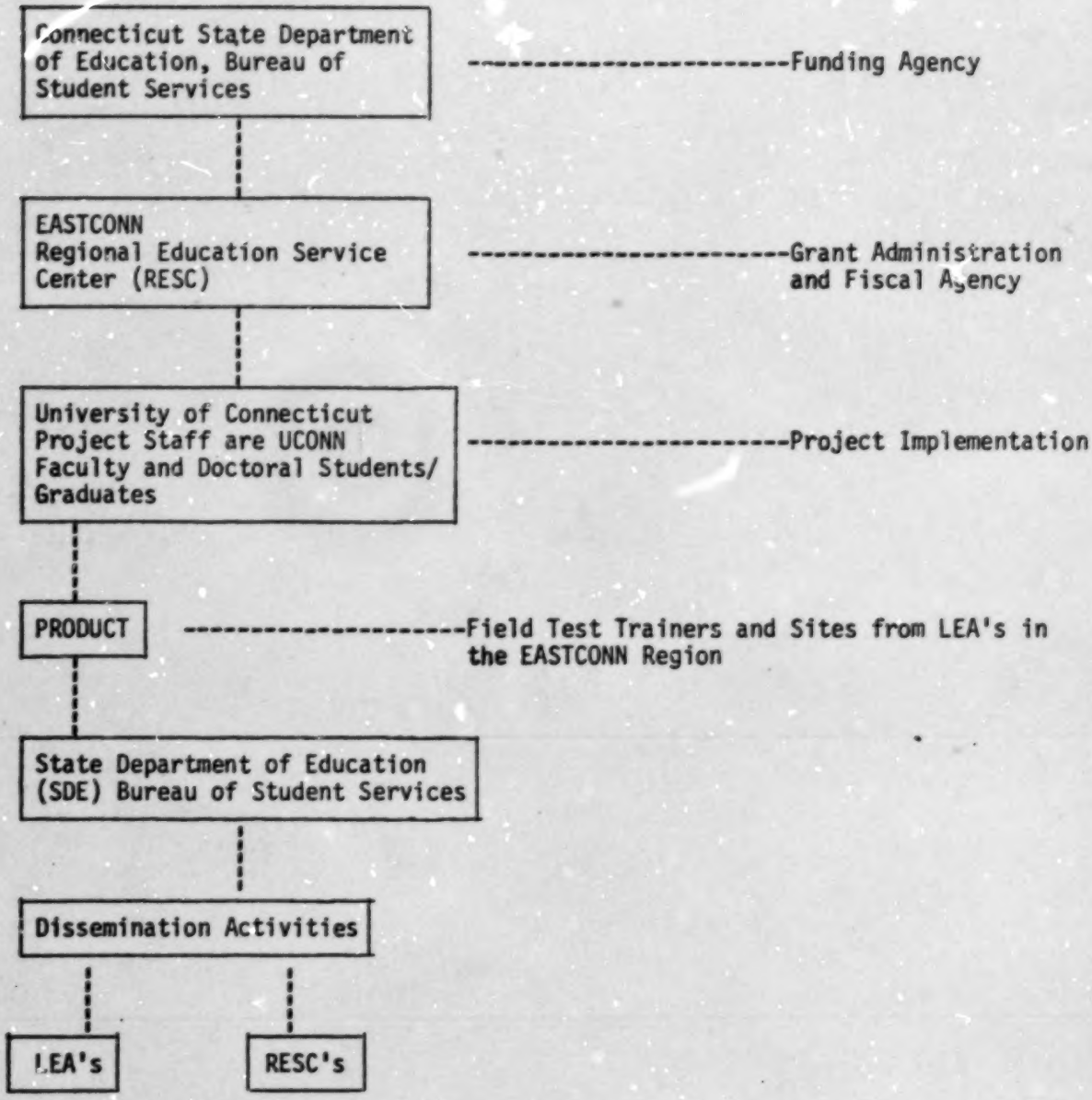
Figure 1 - Project Collaboration


Connecticut State Department of Education, Bureau of Student Services
Funding Agency
EASTCONN Regional Education Service Center (RESC)
Grant Administration and Fiscal Agency
University of Connecticut Project Staff are UCONN Faculty and Doctoral Students/ Graduates
Project Implementation
PRODUCT
Field Test Trainers and Sites from LEA's in the EASTCONN Region
State Department of Education (SDE) Bureau of Student Services
Dissemination Activities
LEA's
RESC's

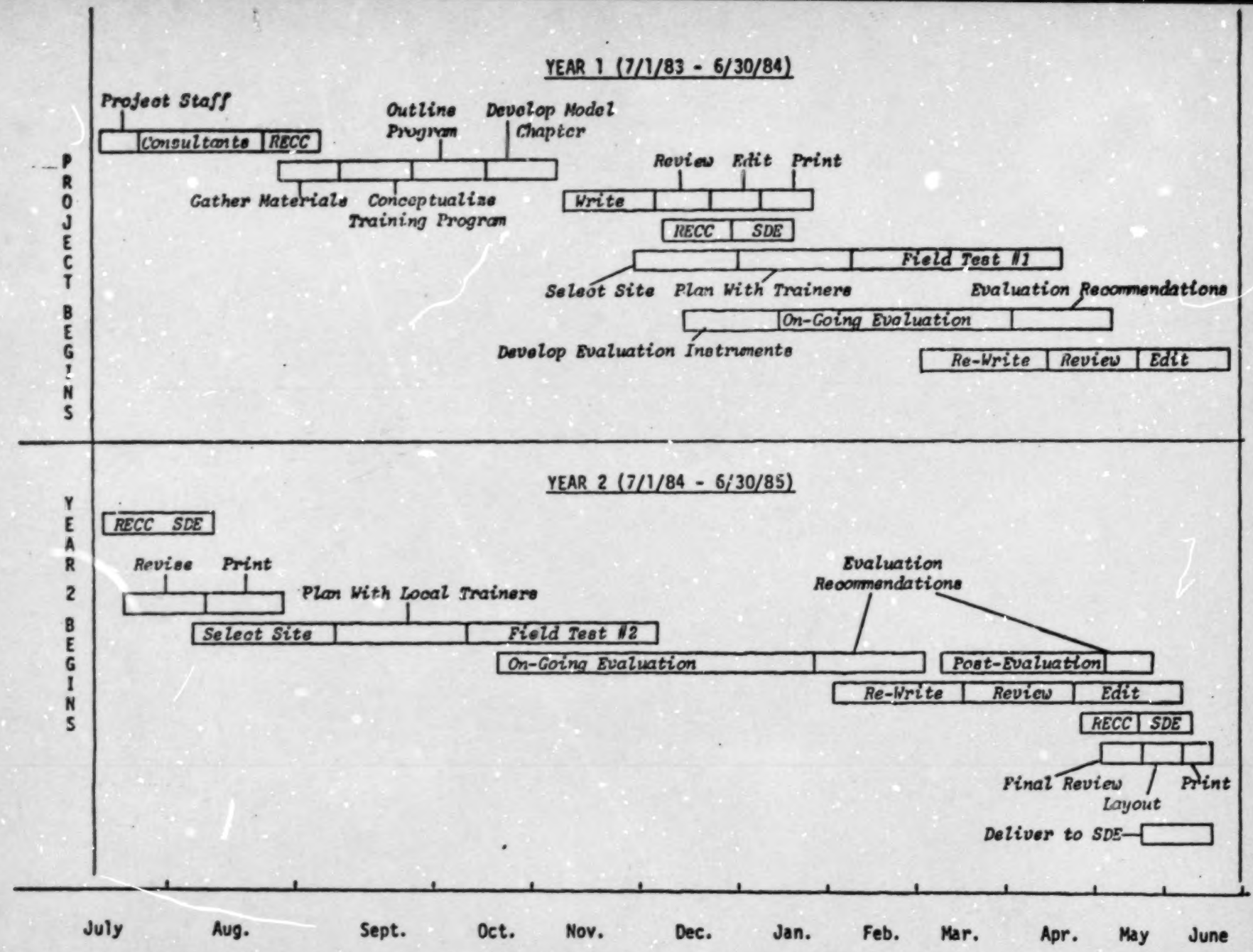


Figure 2. Flow Chart 7/83 - 6/85

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Table 1 - Project Objectives

OBJECTIVES

1. Process Objectives

The project staff will:

a. form a Regular Education Coordinating Committee (RECC) made up of regular classroom teachers and school principals from the East Conn Region, all of whom have special education training, experience with handicapped students and/or involvement with regular education inservice activities.

b. review mainstreaming and least restrictive environment inservice training materials which are available through EASTCONN, Project TEACHER, UCONN's Mainstreaming Grant Library and SERC.

c. review previous needs assessment data collected through SDE's statewide regular education needs assessment and Project TEACHER's EASTCONN needs assessment to present local/statewide needs to the RECC to help plan product development.

d. meet to develop a conceptual framework and chapter outline for the training package.

e. assign personnel to develop sections of the first draft of the package.

f. select sites and personnel for each of the field tests with a focus on using schools with varying characteristics.

g. schedule State Department of Education (SDE) reviews prior to each field test and prior to final editing and printing.

h. plan and implement process-product evaluations throughout the two years of the product with an emphasis on field test evaluations of the training package and follow-up evaluation of the second field test.

i. edit and package the training program in accordance with specifications developed with SDE personnel.

j. deliver approximately 200 copies of the training package to the SDE for distribution to each LEA and RESC with additional copies to SERC, Special School Districts and other agencies.

k. implement post-project activities such as technical assistance to package implementors, sessions for trainers using the package, and follow-up evaluations in selected sites, as specified in negotiations with SDE.

2. Product Objectives

The product will:

a. be based upon State and regional data on needs of regular educators.

b. be planned and developed by a team of educators who are knowledgeable about the needs of handicapped students.

c. provide regular educators with the skills they need to instruct and manage handicapped students in their classrooms.

d. include training and procedures for each LEA to do its own needs assessment to select or prioritize elements of the training program to implement.

e. use a format that allows high priority needs from the local needs assessment to get extra instruction, practice and activities.

f. be a comprehensive inservice training program including approximately 20 hours of instruction which will provide for the following participant objectives.

Each participant will be able to:

1) describe various educationally handicapping conditions.
2) describe various special education alternatives for meeting the needs of handicapped children.
3) describe least restrictive environment, P.L. 94-142 and State Regulations' effect on the regular classroom.
4) explain the relationships between the goals and procedures of special education and those of regular education.
5) explain various behavior management strategies.
6) apply behavior management skills.
7) explain and evaluate alternative teaching-learning strategies and materials.
8) describe the placement team process and regular educators' responsibilities including writing a referral and gathering information to present to the team.
9) explain characteristics of effective communication
10) implement various conferencing strategies.
11) develop an individual education program for a child in the regular classroom. To include the following steps:

a. formulate, administer and evaluate an informal assessment.

b. develop long range goals and short term instructional objectives.

c. formulate and implement teaching-learning procedures.

d. monitor and evaluate student's progress with intervention strategies.

g. utilize a case study approach which involves the participant in a process for change, including:

1) describing the problem.

2) describing the student and the setting.

3) assessing the student (academic and behavioral).

4) specifying instructional objectives.

5) describing teaching-learning activities.

6) ongoing assessment of student performance.

7) evaluating program effectiveness.

h. include a training package with sections on:

1) planning inservice training.

2) developing a local needs assessment.

3) resources for the instructor, instructional resources for use with the student, and background information for the instructor-related to each section.

4) material for instructional TRANSPARENCIES and handouts

5) provide participants with:

a) participant objectives.

b) instructional content.

c) skill practice activities.

d) process for change assignment (see g. above)

evaluating the inservice training program

6) evaluating the inservice training program

j. includes at a minimum content in the following areas:

1) the role of regular educators with handicapped students.

2) assessment.

3) instructional alternatives.

4) management alternatives.

5) collaboration with parents, special educators and other school personnel.